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Township has crack problem

Wainfleet Arena is in need of a major overhaul
Page 7

Big year for the past

Port Colborne's museum reopens for the season
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From Gators to Badgers



DREW FURMINGER/
POSTMEDIA NETWORK
Anthony Infurna and Anna Annibale cozy up to badger mascot Boomer after each graduating Lakeshore Catholic Secondary School student was with a \$2,500 scholarships to Brock University. A total 55 scholarships are being presented through a new program aimed at keeping bright young adults in Niagara. Pictured on Tuesday April 28, 2015 in Port Colborne, Ont. See story on page 2.

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UPFRONT

■ **EDUCATION:** \$2,500 scholarships being awarded at every high school in the region

Brock aims to keep brightest students in Niagara

GREG FURMINGER
Postmedia Network

When high school student Anna Annibale learned her mom had received a phone call from her principal, she was nervous.

What ensued nearly brought her to tears.

She was awarded a \$2,500 scholarship to Brock University — one of 55 the institution is handing out to Niagara high school students this year and which are aimed at putting a cork in the region's brain drain.

"I'm so overwhelmed, and I'm so thankful," the Lakeshore Catholic High School senior said following her surprise visit recently from university officials and the Brock mascot Boomer.

Anthony Infurna, who lives just doors away from Annibale in Fort Erie, is a fellow Gator who was also surprised with a scholarship, making his transition to becoming a Badger all the more easier.

"I knew if I didn't get this, I'd have to work real hard this summer and make a substantial amount of money to pay for tuition."

Both students at the Port Colborne high school plan to reside on the St. Catharines campus to get the complete university experience.

Infurna will take Brock's concurrent education program this fall toward becoming a high school English teacher; Annibale will be studying tourism management in hopes of doing a co-op education placement at Disney World, where she'd like to continue with a career.

Scholarships were also presented last Tuesday to Thorold Secondary School students Sascha Vince, who is enrolling in the biochemistry co-op program, and to Isabel Skeffington, who will be studying biological sciences.

In total, Brock University is awarding 55 scholarships, each worth \$2,500 — a university-funded investment totalling \$137,500 — through its new Principal's Scholarships program, for which



GREG FURMINGER/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Anthony Infurna and Anna Annibale cozy up to badger mascot Boomer after each graduating Lakeshore Catholic Secondary School student was with a \$2,500 scholarship to Brock University. A total 55 scholarships are being presented through a new program aimed at keeping bright young adults in Niagara. Pictured on Tuesday April 28, 2015 in Port Colborne, Ont.

recipients are chosen by the administrative head at every Niagara high school, based on academic and volunteer performance.

"We've heard so many con-

cerns that we're not keeping our best and brightest here — but we're not starting early enough," said university president Jack Lightstone.

The scholarships, he said,

are offered as an incentive for these students to continue their education in Niagara, while Brock continues to nurture its relationship with the community.

"We hope these people will stay and be the next generation of leaders in Niagara."

A complete list of Principal's Scholarship recipients will be released by Brock at a

later date, after winners have confirmed their post-secondary intentions.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ GEORGINA BLACK

A woman on Ridley's wall of men

CHERYL CLOCK

Postmedia Network

High up on the walls of the Great Hall are rows of oil paintings of white men in suits who cast stern eyes into the dining hall at Ridley College.

History is as abundant as air inside this room, built after the Second World War to honour the 80 Ridley boys who fought and died. On one wall hang the commissioned portraits of the school's headmasters, cast in an orange glow by a small light above each painting. On the other side of the room are the portraits of the chairs of the board of governors.

They are all men.

"I love coming in here," says Georgina Black, standing in what she feels is the heart of the school as students file in for a morning snack.

"It gives you a sense of history."

Indeed, Black is herself making history at Ridley.

The school was started as a boarding school for boys, and it's only been in the last 40 of its 125 years that girls have been welcome to attend.

And it's only been since September that Black has been the first female chair of the board of governors.

She is serving a four-year term in a volunteer position that puts her alongside Ridley's headmaster, Ed Kidd. And this Saturday, she will take part in her first inspection of the Ridley cadet corps, a tradition with much pomp and circumstance that involves 500 students from grades 5 to 12.

And Black brings history of her own. She was a student here from 1982-85. Her oldest son, 19-year-old Andrew Watson, graduated from Ridley and is now at a U.S. college. And her youngest son, 15-year-old Jack, is in Grade 10.

She brings to the school a business sense that propelled her to a position as partner and national health sector lead at KPMG Canada. She brings a passion for the school and a vision to engage a younger generation of alumni to "put Ridley on the map as the leading co-ed

boarding school."

And she brings the fact she is a woman.

It's been 40 years since Ridley opened its educational doors to girls. In 1973, there were 10 female students in the upper school. These days, the gender divide is closer to equal — 349 boys and 276 girls.

Yet, Black was hesitant to take the spotlight herself until someone suggested this to her: "You have a responsibility to show up and tell the story so other girls can see it's possible," she says.

Indeed, last spring, after a speech she gave during an event to celebrate 40 years of girls at Ridley, many girls approached her to trade high-fives.

Beyond that, her historical significance is for the future to decide.

"Maybe in 50 years, they'll say that was a defining moment," she says.

BLACK LIVES in Oakville, but grew up in an apartment building in St. Catharines, across from Denis Morris High School.

Her mother, Audrey Black, was an artist and investor. Her father, Andy, was a local businessman who recited poetry at dinner and read physics books for fun. He dreamed of sailing around the world, but because of health problems both his legs were amputated.

Even so, he found a man who built brake and gas pedal mechanisms on his steering wheel so he could drive. And he learned to walk with "tree trunks" for prosthetic legs plus two canes, says Black.

And he believed in education.

Black began high school at Sir Winston Churchill. Then one day, her father brought her in to see the headmaster at Ridley.

"He created the expectation that education and experience was important," she says. "He might have known that he wouldn't be around to shape my education."

Her father died in 1981, when Black was 15 years old. She started at Ridley in Grade 11 as a day student.

There, she challenged her-



Georgina Black at Ridley College. She is the first female chair of the board of governors in the school's 125-year history.

CHERYL CLOCK/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

self with new experiences. She played squash. Learned the flute. Every morning, she met other students in the chapel, and over months learned about world religions. She built friendships and became a leader.

She learned about the importance of modesty and humility. She remembers the often repeated words, passed to gen-

erations of students from Ridley's second headmaster, Harry C. Griffith: "If you lose, say nothing. If you win, say less."

Black learned she could hold her own in a classroom outnumbered by boys.

Then, heading into her final year, her mother broke the bad news. She didn't have enough money for tuition.

Black was crushed. She had been invited to be a prefect, a position of responsibility at Ridley. She was on the debating and basketball teams, and had organized a fundraiser for the famine in Ethiopia.

She confided her fears to the head of Dean's House, then an all-girls boarding house at Ridley. "I think it's going to be OK,"

she assured Black.

That year, part of her tuition was paid through a bursary.

"I remember thinking to myself, I'm going to repay that back plus," says Black.

These days, she gives both her time and money to the school.

She has served on the board of governors for the past decade. She was ready to leave to volunteer with a hospital board when past chair George Hendrie asked her to stay on as chair.

"I said no five times, and then they wear you down," says Black, laughing.

"I agreed to at least think about it."

"I didn't think I'd see a female board chair in my lifetime."

Indeed, Hendrie's final year at Ridley was the first time girls were allowed to be students. In 1973, there were five girls in Grade 12, and five in Grade 13. While some boys felt tradition was under attack, and others greeted the girls with "trepidation" at best, Hendrie saw them as classmates.

"They really had an uphill battle," he says.

His two daughters graduated from Ridley in 2005 and 2007.

And while Black was appointed on merit, not gender, her part in history as the first female board chair is also not insignificant, he says.

"It's evidence the school is really and truly co-educational," says Hendrie.

It sends an important message to female students: "They need to see this is a place where women and men can succeed equally," he says.

And just maybe, it will lead to a female headmaster one day, he suggests.

In four years, at the end of Black's term, her portrait will be placed on the wall of men, and unveiled during a formal ceremony in the dining hall. And there it will remain. Forever in history.

"A culture takes generations to evolve and change," she says. "This is a turning point."

cheryl.clock@postmedia.ca

■ I'VE BEEN THINKING

A special mother

PASTOR GARY TOMIUCK
 Wainfleet Congregational
 Christian Church

It has been about five and a half years since I lost my precious mother, and that aching void in my heart has not diminished through the lonely passages of those years.

I long to hold her, to feel her presence, to stare into her eyes and to hear her voice.

I do not believe that we should pray to the loved ones who have predeceased us, but I like what one person said in regards to his own mother who had passed on, "Lord, would you give my mother a hug from me and tell her that I love her."

That prayer might not seem theologically correct to some people, but the Lord is so kind and loving that He might just do that. But in the here and now I along with many others have priceless and precious memories that time will never erase. Like for one thing turning our house into a home which is a massive difference.

In my mind, I can still see her canning

and filling our fruit cellar with pears and peaches. I can still smell the sweet aroma of her apple pie and other baked goods filling our house. She raised four children, baked, kept the house clean, filled our home with joy and love and never complained that she had major health problems that no one knew about even when we were all so very young.

When we got older it was her own money that was used as a contribution to start our family business, Welland Lumber and Builders Supplies Ltd. As we got older she worked there for many years as the administrator of our business.

She would always make coffee for all of the employees and brought it out to the coffee area with a smile and always a kind word. Adding a personal touch which is sadly lacking in this fast growing technological world. While over 65 years old she thought nothing of carrying out from the stockroom a 50-lb. box of nails to help if we were understaffed. She would never ask anyone to do anything that she was not willing to do herself. Everyone from sales reps to customers, employees family and friends really liked her.

We shared in many barbeques, picnics, and various outings while growing up.

She was not what we would call aggressively evangelistic, but she was a solid Christian who lived out her quiet faith daily. She encouraged me when I wore a leg brace to keep walking, she looked after me when I ate a bar of Icy soap, she was there when I almost lost a finger after being slammed in a door. She applied a poultice to my wrist as I overturned a scalding pot of hot water onto it, she washed and dressed my severe infection that I received when I got poison oak while running through the bush as a child.

As you can tell I was not an easy child not to mention the rebellious stage I went through in my later years causing her untold grief and much agony. But her prayers and the prayers of my grandmother were not in vain. They were answered when the Lord saved me close to 40 years ago. I can hardly believe that I am a pastor now.

At our first church in Welland, she and my Aunt Edie offered lots of encouragement and support as they faithfully attended there for more than six years.

Again, she was well. Little did we know how sick she really was then and how sick she would become later.

About six years ago she developed a very aggressive form of cancer that caused her to deteriorate to a fraction of her former self. Right up to the bitter end she did not complain, not even once. She was always asking how everyone else was.

As the end drew near, we laughed and cried together, had communion and sang a few comforting hymns just before she passed on to glory.

I believe she is now with Christ, and I can hardly wait for that great and glorious grand reunion. I had a God-given mother, a great gift from God who loved to the age of 90.

I miss my mother dearly and daily, but we will have many more memories to make together with her and our Savior Jesus Christ. It might not be

that long now as I now am a senior citizen myself and getting one day closer to our Eternal Home.

Jesus, would you give my mother a hug and tell her that I love her.

Shipwrecks – Fairmount



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Fairmount is shown in the photo from the Ron Beaupre Collection.

SKIP OLLIHAM
 For Postmedia Network

Two ships have sailed the Great Lakes as *Fairmount*.

The first dated from 1903 and construction at the famous Swan Hunter & Wigham Richardson shipyard at Wallsend, England.

The 78.33-metre-long steamer soon headed to the Great Lakes for inland service on behalf of Montreal Transportation Co. It got into trouble in the Welland Canal on Aug. 2, 1913, running into a stone abutment at Lock 23 of the third canal when an American freighter took out the lock gate allowing water to pour unchecked through the chamber.

Fairmount was sold for saltwater service on March 10, 1915, and left the Great Lakes. It stranded at Piana Keys, Acklin Island, Bahamas, on Aug. 23, 1915, and was a total loss. The ship had loaded a cargo of coal at Newport News, Va., for Cienfuegos, Cuba, when it encountered a late summer Atlantic storm and had to be abandoned as a total loss.

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IN BRIEF

Free compost

Niagara Region is offering residents free compost until May 30. Residents can pick up one cubic metre of compost for free, while quantities last, at the Bridge Street

Landfill, 1300 Bridge St., Fort Erie, Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays and statutory holidays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The landfill is closed Sundays. Compost is available to residents of Grimsby, Pelham, Lincoln and West Lincoln only at the Niagara

Road 12 landfill, Concession Rd. 7 in West Lincoln. The landfill is closed Sundays and Mondays. It is open Tuesday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. It's also open Saturdays and statutory holidays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Residents are required to bring their own shovels and

containers and load their own compost, ensuring that loads leaving the site are securely covered. Residents are encouraged to donate non-perishable food items or cash in support of Fort COPE (Community Outreach Program - Erie), Grimsby

Benevolent Fund and West Lincoln Community Care in exchange for the compost.

For more information about Niagara Region's waste management services, call 905-356-4141 or 1-800-594-5542, or visit www.niagararegion.ca/waste.

Getting Older Can be Difficult and the Truth is... Sometimes it Really Hurts!

Sadly, aging can be quite painful. Especially in your joints and the connective tissue in the hands, knees, back, hips and shoulders.

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Taking shape



MURIE ORBATSKA/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

The new headquarters for the Niagara Regional Police is taking shape. The \$65-million project at Valley Way and Portage Rd. in Niagara Falls started in late 2013. The 210,000-square-foot facility, being built over eight acres, will serve as the NRP headquarters, which is currently in St. Catharines. The project is expected to be completed late this year or early in 2016. The Niagara Falls district office on Morrison St. will close when the new headquarters opens. For the first time, several policing departments will be under one roof, housing approximately 680 police service and civilian staff on Monday, April 27, 2015 in Niagara Falls.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **INFRASTRUCTURE:** Patched floor covers poor refrigeration system

Wainfleet needs 'a big overhaul'

ALLAN BENNER
Postmedia Network

Cracked concrete dotted with numerous patches was revealed last week when the ice was removed from the Wainfleet arena.

While the patches, added over the past 40 years since the arena's concrete floor was poured, have kept the facility functioning, it has reached the point where patches might no longer be enough.

Mayor April Jeffs said a recent report on the arena warned township council the refrigeration equipment beneath the concrete is wearing out, too.

If that happens, "then you might be in a predicament," she said.

"Then you might be having to close the arena down for a few weeks in the season. The arena is basically going to need a big overhaul."

Township engineer Richard Nan said it was difficult keeping the ice frozen last season because of leaking pipes under the concrete "which is a safety concern."

And, he added, it's very difficult to determine where

the leaks are without chipping up areas of concrete searching for it.

The price of the repairs — a new concrete floor, new hoards and refrigeration equipment — could cost the township more than \$600,000.

But the township has been saving up.

In preparation for making those repairs, Wainfleet chief administrative officer Scott Luey said the township has been setting aside \$148,000 annually for the past five years to pay for it. By the end of this year, he said, there will be more than \$700,000 in reserve.

Luey said the work should be completed by the civic holiday weekend, when the Ontario Volunteer Firefighters Association annual convention takes place.

Repairs should last at least another 20 years.

The work is part of additional renovations planned over the next five years.

In addition to the arena, Luey said, the township is determining what to do with other facilities, such as its fire halls.

A study by consultant T.L. Powell and Associates rec-

ommended replacing the fire hall near the arena and the fire hall in Winger and building a single hall near the intersection of Forks Rd. and Hwy. 3.

As decisions are made about the fire halls, it could have an impact on the use of some of the rooms within the arena.

"There's a big picture issue here," Luey said. "There are so many options."

While the immediate problems at the arena will be fixed this summer, Jeffs said other improvements are being referred to the fire services master plan and the recreational master plan committees.

"We want to kick it over to



ALLAN BENNER/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Wainfleet chief administrative officer Scott Luey inspects a crack in the concrete of the township arena floor.

them to get some input and feedback," including public meetings, she said.

"I think we have time to sort all this out and utilize everything to the maximum that we can," Jeffs said.

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Niagara Falls - Evening/Wknd Tuesday, May 19

Westline Secondary School 6:00 p.m.

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Region day-care worker accused of assault

A 49-year-old early childhood educator for a Niagara Region day-care centre was arrested Thursday

on a charge of assaulting a child. Niagara Regional Police said the child abuse unit began an investigation Monday into the alleged assault of a child in regional day care.

Niagara Region's commissioner of community services Katherine Chislett said the employee is on paid leave until the matter is resolved. "Absolutely, our 100% top priority is the safety and care of

the children who've been entrusted to us by their parents. We take that incredibly seriously," Chislett said. "And that's why as soon as this came to our attention, we got the police in to get the right investigation and we had the employee leave the workplace at that time." Chislett said everyone involved is co-operating fully with the authorities, which include the Ministry of Education, College of Early Childhood Educators and the police.

She said she wasn't aware of any other case like this at a Niagara Region day-care

before.

Police said the unit charged Julia Muscato with one count of assault.

Police are looking for anyone with information on the matter to contact the child abuse unit at 905-735-7811, ext. 5100.

12 dead kittens found roadside

The discovery of a dozen dead kittens found on the side of the road in Beamsville in early April is under investigation.

Continued on next page



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AMANDA DIRSTEIN

From previous page

Lincoln County Humane Society said a post-mortem examination was recently completed on the kittens, who were found on South Service Rd. near the Town of Lincoln offices on April 8. Executive director Kevin Strooband said the cats ranged in age from six to eight weeks old. They were from at least two litters and as many as four.

The causes of death aren't being revealed by the humane society, but the case is being investigated as a possible act of cruelty to animals. "It's part of the investigation," Strooband said.

Humane society officials are appealing to the public for information about the person or persons who were recently caring for at least two litters of kittens.

Brock, college unite on video-game program

Brock University and Niagara College are partnering on a video-game program.

As part of the 2015 Brock-Niagara Summit, senior administrators

from Niagara's two post-secondary institutions Monday signed an articulation agreement for the new G&M program.

The unique partnership will allow students to earn a bachelor's degree in game design or programming, along with an advanced diploma in game development all in four years. Students will take classes at both Brock and Niagara, and will have access to computer labs at both schools.

New board members for NSI

Niagara Sustainability Initiative, a non-profit organization focused on improving environmental and economic performance in the region, has some new faces on its board of directors. Robert MacKenzie, president of Quartek Group, has been appointed chair of the board, replacing Erin O'Hoski.

New directors are Alison Braithwaite, a writer and environmental leader; Emily Keene, and associate at the Lancaster Brooks & Welch law firm; and Linda St-Amant, financial controller at Pen Financial Credit Union.

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HISTORY



ALLAN BENNER / POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Mathew Niznansky visited the Port Colborne museum, Saturday, celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, on May 2, 2015.

Port Colborne museum opens for 40th season

ALLAN BENNER
Postmedia Network

Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum opened its doors for the season over the weekend, celebrating 40 years of sharing the community's history.

Museum staff member Sherry Spark said she is looking forward to an exceptional year.

"I think it's going to be a great season," she said. "We're highlighting the 40 years we've been a museum."

The anniversary is being celebrated through a display called Lordy, Lordy Look Who's 40, with an item for each year the museum has been open from 1975 until 2014.

It's also the 100th anniversary of the construction of the rental cottage that is now Arabella's Tea Room.

But an exhibit celebrating that historic building, named for Arabella Williams who bequeathed her property to the city to establish the museum, is on display at Queen's Park.

In addition to the anniversaries, Spark said the museum has an exciting lineup

of exhibits and events planned this year.

A few of them include the Towpath Treasurers exhibit, displaying artifacts from the history of the Welland Canal passing through the city; Guiding Light, focusing on the city's lighthouse keepers; and the Razzle Dazzle Christmas celebration planned for December.

"This I will love," she said, referring to the 1950s-themed Christmas event.

While looking back at toys from the 1950s and remembering them or still having them might make people feel old, she said "It's a lot of fun."

She said assistant curator Michelle Mason did an excellent job putting the exhibits together.

The museum is bringing back its cemetery tours this season, on May 14 and 16, Sept. 10 and 12 and Oct. 22 and 24, focusing on the history of some of the prominent people from the community. The museum is open daily noon to 5 p.m.

allan.benner@sunmedia.ca
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Layoffs not inevitable despite Catholic board report

DON FRASER
Postmedia Network

Niagara Catholic District School Board has declared 60 elementary teaching jobs redundant heading into the next school year, as of April 1.

But those numbers are based on old enrolment projections and won't necessarily lead to layoffs.

Education director John Crocco said the 60 figure was based on forecasts at the start of this month. However, enrolment numbers since then have been ramping up.

Crocco said it's possible there will ultimately be no redundancies by next September.

Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association Niagara elementary unit president Marie Balanowski said in an e-mail that board senior staff are "looking at reducing or cutting programs such as English as a second language and Reading Recovery."

"However, the budget is not finalized yet and we are hoping that senior administration will reconsider."

"Senior administration is looking to reduce or eliminate some programs, but we value the services that we provide to students and feel that senior administration can find other

ways to achieve savings. We believe (they) declared too many elementary teachers redundant and (we) are hoping that many of these teachers will be recalled."

A redundancy is a position that is no longer needed, but it doesn't necessarily result in a permanent layoff for a teacher. The board could add new teaching positions elsewhere, and every year some teachers create vacancies by retiring or leaving the board.

Crocco said as his board works toward a "balanced and sustainable annual budget," programs and services need to be flexible to allow different ways to deliver them.

"We are focused on aligning the ministry funding with expenditures, and that's an expectation of the ministry, to submit a balanced budget," he said.

"Our ESL, literacy and numeracy programs will continue to be provided to students next year."

Meanwhile, Crocco noted, two-thirds of the funding boards receive from the province is directly related to student enrolment.

"We continue to be in a period of declining enrolment and have about 500 less students since last year," he said. "And that's also reflective of

the changing demographics in Niagara."

In addition to meeting class-size thresholds required by the ministry, according to Niagara Catholic's collective agreement with its teachers it had to declare elementary redundancies by April 1.

"Since (then) enrolment

continues to increase ... by approximately 90 to 100 students," Crocco said.

With that increase, plus retirements and leaves ... the board could achieve "minimal or potentially no redundancies by September 2015," Balanowski said there were no elementary teacher redundancies at the Catholic board last year.

Scott McAvoy, president of the Niagara secondary unit of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association, said any redundancies declared for his members will likely not be known until mid-May.

Earlier this month, trustees at District School Board of Niagara were told there are no redundancies for its current 1,416 elementary and 947 secondary teaching positions. That's the first time in roughly five years that has happened.

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■ EDUCATION: Municipalities to get formal role in planning

DSBN to get new process for school closures

DON FRASER
Postmedia Network

A new policy on school closure reviews is on deck for District School Board of Niagara.

Staff recently told trustees the province feels the current process is too contentious, inflexible and long.

Municipal representatives get no formal role and trustees don't always vote in recommendations from the accommodation review committees, known as ARCs, staff said.

A new set of guidelines was recently released that are effective immediately.

All Ontario school boards must revise their own ARC rules before any further school closings or amalgamation reviews.

Since 2007, Niagara's public board has closed 21 elementary schools and built three new ones.

Three more are under construction — Twenty Valley, Harriet Tubman and a new Ridgeway facility.

Four high schools have also been shut, while a new Fort Erie secondary school will open in 2017.

All trustee-approved closures followed public and senior staff accommodation review committees that were based on the Education Ministry's pupil accommodation review guidelines last updated in 2009.

The revised guidelines, to be firming up locally with public input, include more

emphasis on student achievement and less on the impact of a shut-down on the general community.

It also demands extra pre-planning by the board before a review starts, and formal involvement by the municipality.

The rules for reviews also mean a shorter ARC timeline, to three months from six, and a minimum of two public input meetings.

"The change, to me, that's crucial is we will get a packet (of ARC information each time given) to all trustees," said trustee Dave Schaubel, chair of DSNB's program and planning committee.

He said in the past, only one or two trustees connected to each review would have that comprehensive document package.

"We'll all have (that), well in advance, so we can be well informed when people are talking to us."

On May 5, a DSNB draft policy on the accommodation review process was to be released.

From May 6 to June 3, that policy will be posted on the DSNB website dsbn.org for community comment.

No public meetings on a new policy have yet been scheduled, but the board says it's an option if more consultation is needed.

People will be able to mail comments to 191 Carlton St., St. Catharines, L2R 7P4, attention superintendent Lora Courtois.

A new policy will be voted on at a June 22 board meeting.

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■ WELLAND CANAL

Canal memorial project refocuses its priorities

GRANT LAFECHE
Postmedia Network

The committee tasked with creating a memorial to the men who died building the Welland Canal has started a process of breaking down its ballooning budget.

St. Catharines Mayor Walter Sendzik, who co-chairs the task force with St. Catharines MP Rick Dykstra, said Saturday the committee is breaking down the project into phases rather than attempting to budget something grand in one shot.

"The original purpose of the task force was to get the memorial built, and we're going to do that. That is Phase 1," Sendzik said, the day after the committee met to deal with a budget that has grown to more than \$1 million from \$450,000.

"After that, we can look at the parkette, to give people who visit it a place to reflect. That is Phase 2, and then following that we can start to look at Phase 3 which would be any enhancements."

Some committee members balked at the more than \$1 million price tag for the memorial project, suggesting it was too expensive and too difficult to fundraise.

Sendzik said the parkette included in the selected design for the memorial which has not yet been publicly released, nearly doubled the cost of the project. This was due in part because of the cost of enhancements to the parkette, including lights and benches.

But those items were not really scrutinized by the committee, he said. Some may not be necessary, others could be fund-raised for and still others might have cheaper alternatives.

The committee's first task, he said, is to bring a budget to St. Catharines city council for the memorial itself as a first phase of the project, before moving to the other elements.

The memorial to the workers killed during the 1914 to 1932 construction period cannot be erected at the Lock 3 Museum site until renovations to the Lock 3 property are completed in 2017.

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■ **LABOUR:** Hourly wages to have climbed at Port Colborne, Sudbury by \$2.20 in 2020

5-year deal for Vale workers

GREG FURMINGER
Postmedia Network

Vale workers in Port Colborne and Sudbury have ratified a new five-year contract that's expected to raise hourly wages by \$2.20 by the end of its term.

Wages will increase across the

board in each year of the new agreement, United Steelworkers said in a release after voting closed late last Friday afternoon.

Cost-of-living adjustments will be added to the wage increases each year. Based on projected inflation of 2% annually, that

is expected to generate wage increases of 44 cents per hour each year over the life of the agreement.

Each union member also will receive a \$4,500 signing bonus.

The new contract calls for substantial increases in contributions

to employees' pension plans. By the end of the collective agreement, the basic pension for a 30-year employee will be \$3,750 per month.

The new contract has been ratified by 87% of USW Local 6500 members in Port Colborne and 76.7% of USW Local 6500 members in Sudbury.

Turnout for ratification votes was 91% of the 115 employees in Port Colborne and 89% of the 2,700 workers in Sudbury.

"This agreement is a tremendous achievement for our members and will benefit our families, our pensioners and our community for several years to come," Rick Bertrand, union president in Sudbury, said in a union news release.

Said Sean Sparkes, USW president in Port Colborne, "We have negotiated an agreement that provides long-term security and that addresses our members' key priorities, including wages, pensions, benefits and contract language."

The new collective agreement was reached one month prior to the expiry of the existing contract, which expires May 31 and which was reached in 2010 following a year-long strike.

"We successfully engaged in a new approach to bargaining with the com-

pany, focused on negotiations at the local level," said Myles Sullivan, USW North-eastern Ontario area co-ordinator, the union's lead negotiator.

"We succeeded in reaching a settlement earlier in the process than has ever been accomplished in more than five decades of bargaining history," he said.

The new contract that expires in 2020 also includes benefit improvements that will see increases in vision care coverage and increased payments for sickness and accident coverage. The agreement also features improvements to contract language, including enhanced provisions affecting grievance procedure, seniority recognition, contracting out and job postings.

"We are extremely pleased with the outcome," Mitch Medina, Vale's lead negotiator, said in a company news release.

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Roman A. Groch volunteers in his community with the Winter Festival of Lights, as a Rotarian and as a former member of the Welland Hospital Foundation board. He is a supporter of youth programs and is committed to building a vibrant community. One example of this commitment was his donation to create the Groch Family Fund, an endowment fund within the Children & Youth in Recreation Fund, to support and develop tomorrow's youth.

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■ **TRANSPORTATION:** An introduction to RideCo

App could be of use to regional transit system

ROB HOULE

Postmedia Network

There's an app for that.

Niagara Region's transportation strategy steering committee heard recently that there's an app to consider as the region works toward its goal of a fully integrated municipal transit system.

Co-founder Matthew Monteyne introduced committee members to RideCo, a computer and mobile application that allows users to book shared private-enterprise transportation, such as a taxi service.

"It effectively allows consumers to book personalized transit that's flexible and cost-effective," Monteyne told committee members.

"What we do is, we take... users who are booking these trips, and we aggregate them," Monteyne said. "We have a cloud-based logistics solution that's constantly taking all these different people where they want to go and generating highly efficient itineraries for transportation partners to execute on."

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Users book a pickup time online via a computer or their

mobile device far in advance or in as little as 15 minutes ahead of time. They can either choose to be picked up at home or at a "hub," such as a mall or hospital. If they choose the hub, the trip costs less, since a hub is more likely to have more than one rider. Others are picked up and dropped off along the way.

The Town of Milton and Metrolinx began a one-year pilot project, at a cost of \$125,000 each, using the app to book rides to and from Milton's GO train station. The idea being it will encourage train riders to leave their cars at home, easing pressure on an overflowing parking lot, and fill the route gaps of the town's transit system. Just as public transit, the system will be subsidized by the municipality, with Monteyne telling the committee the Milton pilot is based on a 60% cost recovery. A *Toronto Star* article said RideCo users in Milton will not pay more than \$1.95 for a ride to the GO station.

The app could prove to be an asset to Niagara Region as it works towards a permanent transit system that would service all 12 of Niagara's municipalities.

"It's very efficient in low-

density areas, because we can use small vehicles," Monteyne said. "Three passengers fills a car, so you can go into these little regions that would otherwise not be well served by a bus line and you could actually service those regions."

Those private shuttles could take riders in Wainfleet, for example, to a hub in Port Colborne to hook up with a

future regional bus service, or riders from West Lincoln to a hub in Lincoln or Grimsby.

"This sounds like a really practical solution to our concern about running a regional transit line on three hubs and how you serve the rest," St. Catharines regional Councillor Bruce Timms said.

The region has committed to work with the municipal-

ities to create a permanent municipal transit system by fall.

The minutes of the transportation committee will be forwarded to regional council where councillors will have opportunity to discuss Monteyne's presentation.

Steering committee chair Tony Quirk, regional councillor for Grimsby, advised the

committee, which comprises regional and municipal politicians and a representative from each of Brock University and Niagara College, that Monteyne will return in the next few months to give an update on the pilot project in Milton.

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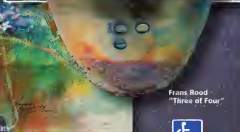
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■ HUMANE SOCIETY

Pet clinic a success

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

In its first year of operations, Welland and District Regional Spay Neuter Clinic has seen some pawisite results.

The low-cost, high-volume clinic, operated by Welland and District Humane Society with help from a Pet-Smart Charities of Canada grant, has seen procedures performed on more than 4,000 animals since opening its doors last year.

The clinic, at 700 East Main St., began offering its services first to rescue and shelter animals, before expanding its outreach in September to pets belonging to members of the public.

The facility has since seen 640 dogs and 1,953 cats, as well as 1,375 shelter animals spayed or neutered.

What began as a vision has been brought to fruition and with "great success," shelter animal care manager Tammy Gaboury said.

The clinic is open five days during the week, but staff will soon begin offering appointments one or two Saturdays a month to increase convenience for pet owners.

As a high-volume clinic, specializing only in spay and neuter procedures, staff are able to perform 25 to 30 surgeries a day.

"We plan on keeping the numbers up as high as possible, while also maintaining quality," humane society executive director John Greer said.

"This is a service the community is in desperate need of."

Greer stressed that while the clinic is busy, there is no waiting list to book an appointment.

To ensure quality remains high, a survey is sent out each day to pet owners who've interacted with the clinic.

"We've gotten a lot of great response," Gaboury said.

"People have really shown their appreciation for having a low-cost clinic."

A website is expected to be launched for the facility in the near future that will allow pet owners to pay for procedures and have their questions answered online.

Through the clinic, the humane society was able to spay and neuter

119 community cats, most feral, in April alone.

"We're stopping that over-population from happening," Gaboury said, adding the timing is perfect as spring is when many felines enter their heat cycle.

Since February, staff have also been operating a mobile community outreach unit that allows animals to be picked up for surgery, brought to the clinic and returned to their owners in areas where transportation is limited.

Community events are being planned, Gaboury said, that will allow people who don't have access to transportation to bring their animals to a centralized location for pick up.

The humane society is also reaching out to the public with its mobile spay and neuter clinic, the first of its kind in Ontario.

The clinic-on-wheels was used for the first time April 18 and 19 during a special initiative that saw procedures performed on 37 animals in the Six Nations of the Grand River community.

Veterinarians, vet techs and other volunteers donated their time at the event, which reached out to pet owners who would not otherwise have access to treatment for their animals.

"This allows us to attack pet over-population on different fronts, not just one," Greer said.

Other remote communities have since been contacting the Welland humane society in hopes of accessing the mobile unit.

In the next few weeks, the humane society will be launching its Got a Pet? Get a Vet campaign, which encourages people who visit the clinic to have their pet spayed or neutered to continue working with local vets to ensure their pets remain in good health.

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■ **FUNDRAISING:** 110 participate in Welland, 150 in Niagara Falls and 250 in St. Catharines

Hundreds walk for friends with multiple sclerosis

ALLAN BENNER
Postmedia Network

Welland resident Amelia Powell's thoughts were with a few close friends as she walked along the banks of her city's rec-

reational canal Sunday. She was one of 110 people participating in the Mandarin MS Walk in Welland, while about 150 took part in a walk in Niagara Falls and another 250

joined in a walk organized in St. Catharines. There were 57 events organized across Ontario this year, and more than 160 across Canada.

While Powell was at the event

with a team led by her friend Lorissa Strychowskyj, she said has two more friends who are living with multiple sclerosis, Andrea Epp and Roseanne Brooks.

She said "it's hard to believe" that in her circle of friends, three people have been diagnosed with the neurological disorder.

It's an indication of the prevalence of MS in Canada, where more than 100,000 people are living with disease — the highest rate in the world.

She said the progression of MS is at different stages among her friends. While Strychowskyj was able to lead a team of friends called the Rizzy Zombie Crew, she said another friend is using a mobility scooter to get around while another doesn't have the strength she once did.

"They're still functioning and trying to make it in society," she said.

She felt compelled to join the walk Sunday in the hope of helping her friends and others who have been diagnosed with MS.

Pelham resident Karen Goldhawk participated in her first MS Walk in 2000, the same year she was diagnosed with the illness.

But even before she was diagnosed, she said, she always wanted to take part in the annual event, held this year along a path from Notre Dame high school to Merritt Island and back.

Despite living with MS, Goldhawk said she has been lucky.

"I've been really good," she said. "I haven't had many symptoms even since starting the medication in 2000."

But her own health can be attributed to the money raised through events like the MS Walk, which provides funding for research as well as support for Niagara families living with the disease.

"But I want to see a cure. I want to see an end," said Goldhawk, a home-care nurse who looks after several chil-

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Affects the central nervous system, interfering with the brain's signals to the body.

An unpredictable disease that causes different symptoms in people, such as numbness, vision problems, impaired balance, fatigue and paralysis.

Research has led to treatments that can reduce the progression of the disease in some cases.

ents in advanced stages of MS.

Although the weather was perfect for the outdoor event, organizer Dave Wintle said there were fewer participants than in past years, likely due to competition from other events.

"There are so many walks around this weekend," he said. "People just can't spread themselves out."

In past years, there have been so many participants he needed 100 volunteers to keep the event running smoothly.

This year, he only needed 20 hard-working people to help. Nevertheless, Wintle was satisfied with the event.

"I think it turned out really well," he said. "It's going to be a great day."

Robyn Garner, the local MS Society's manager of client services, shared his enthusiasm.

Last year, Niagara's three MS Walks brought in about \$160,000, and she was hoping to raise about the same this year.

"Nobody's the same," she said. "You see it from one spectrum to the other. There are people that live with very limited progression and others that may progress quickly."

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New judge seated on the bench



FRANKI NEWMAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Paul R. Sweeny is welcomed by Chief Justice of the Superior Court of Justice Heather Forster Smith as the newest judge at the Welland courthouse last Monday in Welland. Sweeny was appointed to the Ontario Superior Court of Justice.

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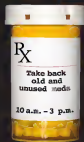
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■ **ENTERTAINMENT:** Hall of Famers to play casino Aug. 20

ZZ Top coming to Falls



BEN FLOSSE/JOURNAL DE MONTRÉAL

ZZ Top is scheduled to perform at Fallsview Casino on Aug. 20.

Postmedia Network

Rock and Roll Hall of Famers ZZ Top take the stage at Niagara Fallsview Casino (Resort or the first time ever this August.

For one night only they will perform their repertoire of hits such as *Tush*, *Legs*, *La Grange*, *Gimme All Your Lovin'* and *Sharp Dressed Man*.

Also this August, more than 40 international daredevil stuntmen, trapeze artists and contemporary dancers will soar over the audience and leap on stage to perform feats of strength and agility with *Le Grand Cirque* – Adrenaline.

Singer-songwriter Andy Kim, who has sold more than 30 million records worldwide and has written songs for music greats, will also perform in August, as will platinum-selling singer-songwriter Paul Rodgers, who has sold more than 90 million records

Le Grand Cirque – Adrenaline

July 31-Aug. 16 (excluding Aug. 5, 12)

Tickets: Start at \$20

ZZ Top

Aug. 20

Tickets: Start at \$60

Andy Kim

Aug. 21, 22

Tickets: Start at \$20

Paul Rodgers

Aug. 28, 29

Tickets: Start at \$35

Tickets will be available starting at noon Friday at Fallsview Casino Box Office, or at all Ticketmaster outlets. Call Ticketmaster at 1-877-833-3110 or visit www.ticketmaster.ca.

and is a founding member and main songwriter of several bands, including Free, Bad Company and The Firm.

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■ ENTERTAINMENT

Stray Theatre dusts off Ashes to Ashes

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

It's a small company hoping to make a big impression.

Stray Theatre of St. Catharines returns Thursday with its only show of the year, and as always, director Peter Feldman will make it count with a one-two punch of Harold Pinter and Samuel Beckett.

Ashes to Ashes will be the company's first production since Daniel Macivor's *Communism* last February.

"Our audiences are small but loyal," says Feldman, a former Brock University theatre professor who founded the company 12 years ago.

This year's offering consists of two short plays — Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes*, and Beckett's one-woman monologue *Rockaby* (which Stray Theatre did a few seasons back).

Both are perfect for an intimate audience, and will lead his cast down some dark roads.

Feldman recently discov-

WHAT: *Ashes to Ashes*

WHERE: Sullivan-Mahoney Courthouse, 101 King Street, St. Catharines

WHEN: May 7 to 17

TICKETS: \$15 adults, \$12 seniors/students. Matinees: Pay what you can 905-685-1937

ered the Pinter play, and was eager to take a crack at it. He doesn't believe it has ever been staged in Niagara.

"It's a very challenging play," he says. "It's full of digressions and diversions."

The story begins with a man interrogating his wife over a former lover, but takes a harsh turn when she revisits a tragic story from her past.

A scene begins to emerge, which is quite harrowing," says Feldman. "Sort of a *Sophie's Choice* situation. You begin to realize, maybe the play isn't about his interrogation of her, maybe it's about something else entirely."

The 40-minute play stars



JOHN LAW / POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Stray Theatre founder Peter Feldman directs *Ashes to Ashes*, two one-act plays by Harold Pinter and Samuel Beckett. It opens at the Sullivan-Mahoney Courthouse May 7.

Pat Noonan and Ada Smith-Sparling.

For Beckett's *Rockaby*, Stray Theatre favourite Dawn Crysler speaks directly to the audi-

ence as an old woman facing the end of her life.

"She talks about wanting to find someone to tell her story to," says Feldman. "Beckett

had this idea that you're never fully alive unless you're perceived by someone else."

It will be the company's final show at the Sullivan

Mahoney Courthouse. Feldman hopes to relocate to the new First Ontario Performing Arts Centre, but he'll miss the intimacy of the old place.

"It's very user friendly," it's very audience friendly," he says. "And while costs have gone up, it's still just about affordable."

Either way, Feldman will continue snuffing out scripts to keep Stray Theatre unpredictable.

"It's great to still find plays that are challenging and intriguing," he says, adding it can be as simple as picking a book off a shelf one day and finding his next show.

"Except when you're searching for plays, it's not so simple. It's quite a search. I go to various book shops in Toronto and the other side of the border and look for scripts."

"I don't know whether *Ashes to Ashes* has been done in Canada, actually."

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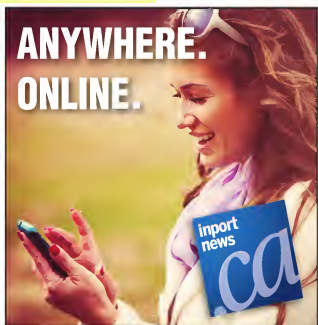
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